

Movie Makers

November-December 2003

Volume 13 No. 6

The American Motion Picture Society

Sponsors of the oldest continuing Film/video Festival in the world.

73rd Annual American International Film and Video Festival Results

First Place: "American Senior" by Laurie York \$100 prize

Second Place: "Hard of Hearing" by Mark Levy \$50 prize

Third Place: "Manatee" by Harold Cosgrove \$25 prize

Other Top Ten Awards
"California Rug Project"
Carmen Goodyear and Laurie York

"The Last Flower" Stan Whitsitt

"Beneath the Sea"
Malcomb Colditz

"Wonder Worker" Walt Haskell

"Chorale" Matt Fore

"Cows on Parade" Bill and Mary Leeder

"Video Postcard from Iceland" Walt and Pam Gilmore

Honorable Mentions

"A Wordless Workshop-Expanding Tripod Handle" Walt Gilmore

"Beyond the Wall" Howard Lockwood

"Florida Snail Boxes"
Ephraim Horowitz

Best Editing Award
Sponsored by Jim Beach
"Chain Link" Colin Pate

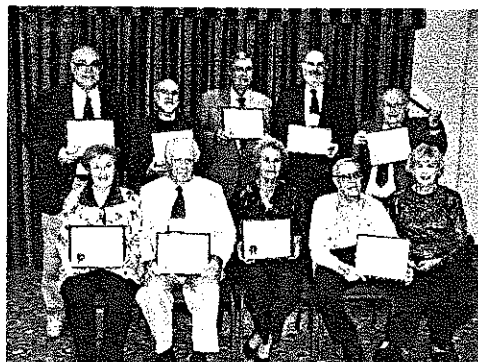
Best Picture Story Award
Sponsored by Roger Garretson
"A Prague Romance"
Oskar and Daniela Siebert

Best Experimental Entry
"A Quiet Evening at Home"
Stan Whitsitt

Best Foreign Entry
"A Prague Romance"
Oskar and Daniela Siebert

Best Nature Entry
"Single Mom" Howard Lockwood

Best Documentary
"Amomi" Ephraim Horowitz



AMPS Winners

Entries other than "Top Ten"
"Amomi" Ephraim Horowitz

"A Prague Romance"
Oskar and Daniela Siebert

"A Cocktale" Mark Levy

"A Letter to Mary" Roger Garretson

"A Quiet Evening at Home"
Stan Whitsitt

"Baby It's You" Gregory Raw

"Canyon Contrasts" Bill Leeder

"Changing Times" Margaret Chamberlain

"Chain Link" Colin Pate

"Chinatown" Eleanor Haire

"Florida Snail Boxes"
Ephraim Horowitz

"Hawaii" Harold Cosgrove

"Hard of Hearing" by Mark Levy

"Homecoming" Margaret Chamberlain

"Observing Progress" Eleanor Haire

"Planet Earth, Part 1" Jim Beach

"Preserving the Spectacular" Joyce Axelrod

"Single Mom" Howard Lockwood

"Success and Failure" Jim Beach

"The Rhythm of the Process" Matt Jenkins

"Ticket Deride" Mark Levy

"UFO" Ned Cordery/Alberto Knepcamp

inside...

Joint Festival was a Big Success!

Technical

Diary of a Film, Part 1

Winners Reel and Copyright Issues Discussion Video now available

Page 2

page 3

page 4

page 8

Movie Makers

Dedicated to the interests of the Serious Motion Picture Maker.

Vol.13 November-December 2003
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George W. Cushman
Founder,
1909-1996

Matt Jenkins, Editor

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Address correspondence to the Society, 30 Kanan Rd. Oak Park, CA 91377-1105. E-mail: RGARETSON@AOL.COM.
www.angelfire.com/movies/amps

Officers of the Society:
Walt Gilmore-President
Roger Garretson-Secretary/
Treasurer
Directors: Brenda Lantow, Bob Lehl, Stan Smith, Brian Gubler Ernest Smith, Brian Christanson

SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES

CANADA, Margaret Chamberlain, 29-901 Kentwood Lane Victoria, BC V8Y 2Y7.

UNITED KINGDOM, Lee Prescott, 37, Canberra, Stonehouse Gloucestershire, GL 10 2PR England

JOINT FESTIVAL WAS A BIG SUCCESS!

Howard Lockwood

(Howard Lockwood is a member of AMPS and AMMA, where he was just named a Fellow, for his service and achievements. He provides this report as a service to fellow video makers.)

The grand video festival held jointly by AMPS (American Motion Picture Society); AMMA (Amateur Movie Makers Association); and TBW (Ten Best of the West) on October 9-11, at Buena Park, CA was a huge success. There were 54 registrants, and 131 contest entries combined for six contests, not accounting for numerous videos being submitted to several contests.

The meeting was superbly planned by **Roger Garretson** and **Dicie Sizemore** as co-chairs. And the execution was flawless. Dicie served as MC with good humor, yet efficiently. Roger handled registration and business matters. Helping were **Walt Gilmore**, who handled the projection of the many videos smoothly and without hassles or complaints; **Evelyn Garretson**, **Ken Sizemore**, and **Lee Agnew**, who made the professionally designed program cover. Having gone to AMMA festivals since 1995, this, I thought, was one of the best.

KNOTT'S BERRY FARM

As an optional part of the program, participants were invited to enter a first-of-its kind contest, a two minute in-camera video of the Inde-

pendence Hall Replica. Bad lighting and ambient noise proved to be a real challenge to the six who participated. The shoot was followed by the huge, famous and delicious Knott's Berry Farm chicken dinner, attended by 28 of us.



Independence Hall Contest Winners

Mr Ron Rennie, Mark Levy, Margaret Chamberlain

LECTURES AND PANEL DISCUSSION

There were three very informative lectures and a good Q and A panel discussion.

"Post Production Scripting—Or Making Movies from Random Stuff" – Bernie Wood

Bernie, the AMMA Monitor editor for five years, and a winner in many contests, demonstrated how to take random vacation shots and put them into a creditable video. He showed the raw footage of a trip to Maine, which was the kind of unplanned shooting virtually all of us do. It had no theme or beginning or end. He didn't know what to do with all this (been there?) but then got the idea simply to use his scenes of trees, augmented by other shooting as needed, to make a philosophical short documentary on humans' dependence on trees. It was a polished and interesting product.

In another example he turned what could have been a boring video on puffins into a very amusing one, by using humorous self-written poetry

(Continued on page 5)

TECHNICAL

Jim Beach.

HOW TO DISTRIBUTE YOUR MOVIE?

Why would that be an issue? Put it in the mail or hand it to a friend or relative like you always do.

Not so fast, there are many ways to distribute your movie and it is time to start considering the possibilities.

To consider how they are sent or distributed you must first decide how they are to be duped, *duplicated*, *dubbed or copied* and to whom they will be distributed. Some recipients may not have every means to play them. Most every household has a VHS, some but not most have S-VHS and MiniDV VCRs. By now about half the households in the US, Europe and Japan have DVDs but not all will play home made DVD-R discs, just DVD video movies. So if they are for personal use be sure to check first.

You may say, what's to consider, just put at fresh tape it a VCR and copy your master tape from another VCR. That is just fine but in the **modern age** we have several more options worth considering.

Depending of course on your

equipment, here are some of the modern age means of duplication and distribution to consider:

Videotape is of course the standby but please consider the advantages of using Super-VHS rather than plain VHS. The Image is so much better and the Hi-fi audio is better even if it is monaural. **Unfortunately** some of our National contests permit only VHS. Old ideas die hard I guess and it is a shame to not have it shown the best it can be after you have spent hours getting the best possible image and audio on your movie's master. Whatever you do, avoid making a copy of a copy, you loose more quality each time analog tape is copied.



Jim Beach

MiniDV tape is even better and you get CD quality audio. Copies made from copies are OK with digital as each copy is essentially the same as the original. Most of the contests now permit a choice of VHS, Super VHS, MiniDV, and

European contests even permit DVDs. More on the latter two later.

If you use videotape, after carefully labeling both the tape and the case be sure the tab is pulled, or slid to the safe position, or tape is removed if used, so that your movie won't accidentally be erased. It happens.

To mail your tapes, self-sealing bubble envelopes are best and easiest. There are sizes for MiniDV as well as standard cassettes. The Post Office also has free cardboard mailers. Of course you can wrap them yourself but do not add any packing that can shed dust or flakes that might get into the cassette and screw up the tape transport in the VCR. The old style non-bubble envelopes sometimes did use such padding.

If you are fortunate enough to be editing on a non-linear system, it is usually best to make your distribution copy directly from the hard drive rather than going to a tape or DVD master. If you don't and it is analog you will lose a generation if you make a master first. If you want a master on tape make it after you make the copies.

DVDs have many advantages. If you are lucky enough to have a DVD burner and your distribution source can play them. They offer several advantages

(Continued on page 7)

Diary of a film - Part 1.

Ned Cordery

This is being written as the process unfolds so it could easily come to a very early end!

Where I live in Southern Utah the population is a mix of descendants of the Mormon pioneers and recent arrivals, many of whom are retired and have moved from the cold Northern States to live in the sun, enjoy the golf and recreation and the unrivalled scenery. On the surface the retirees are fulfilling a lifetime's dream, but what, I wondered, if the dream has a tinge of nightmare to it, what if all was not as perfect as expected?

My idea developed into wondering what would happen if a couple retired to S Utah from the North and the man desperately missed his corporate life as a senior VP with responsibility for a huge budget, plants and hundred of employees? What is the effect of the transition from one day being immersed in demanding work and deadlines to the next day only having to decide what time to tee off? What if this was a liberating experience for a loyal and loving wife who had always lived in her husband's shadow?

Enough "what ifs?" to launch

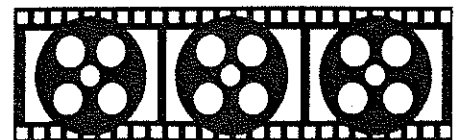
several films so I sat down and wrote a script that has now been through several revisions and is titled "Red Rock Blues". A script like this is mainly dialogue and I write and revise the dialogue directly to the WP program, what an improvement over the days of pencil and paper or typewriter and white out. Larry and Rose are the main protagonists and we fade in at the point where they have settled in their new house and all the excitement of retirement parties and the move are behind them. Larry is now faced with the rest of his life without the daily demands of his job for Rose this is release time. She met Larry at College where she was an art major with a real talent for painting, they married immediately after graduation and had a family committing her to all the demands of family life and supporting Larry through the hard times. Larry climbed the corporate ladder to almost the highest level, he loved his work and had no interests outside it other than golf which was as much a work activity as a relaxation, he has only the vaguest ideas of the impact of retirement imagining golf and walks but not being able to fill in the gaps. This is the launching point for the story of Larry and Rose and how they handle a new life, in Larry's case not very well in Rose's case the most liberating experience of her life.

As most writers know when creating people on the page

after a short time they develop a life of their own and surprise the writer as their characters round out and they become almost real, idiosyncratic people. I enjoyed writing RRBs and also began the visualization process with my long time co-worker, Alberto, the designated cinematographer he is a man with a keen artist's eye and brings many original ideas about the framing and the camera positions. His wife Sue is nominated production manager and my wife Mary is sound recirdist and still photographer, an architect friend, Iris is the production designer. The script is still in some degree of flux but we have a very clear idea of its direction although there is some disagreement about the ending.

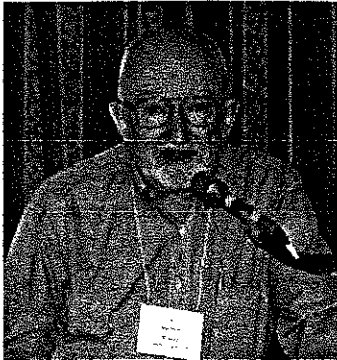
One thing is very clear, this film will be too long for the usual festivals including AMPS, and we estimate a running time of about 30 to 40 minutes so will have to look for festivals with a more generous time limit.

Now to the hard part, casting the actors, as we have only just started this process so look to Part 2 for the progress report.



(Continued from page 2)
in the narration.

Again, his creativity was shown in taking some once-in-a-lifetime shots of a baby tern repeatedly trying to swallow a fish, and turning them into a hilarious video by adding choking sounds and a "dialog" between the mother and baby.



Bernie Woods

Bernie's suggested steps, in brief:
Collect raw video
Brainstorm for ideas.
Write a treatise, a short paragraph of the overall story.
Review shots to use.
Take additional as needed
Expand treatise to a script
Assemble shots, to follow script
Conform narration to video. Read aloud, and listen to how it sounds
Record sound to final cut
Show your movie with pride!

"Script Writing and Narration" – Jerry Turk

Jerry, a frequent contest winner, and the highly effective Honors Chairman of AMMA, started by asking the question, "Why do we make movies?" "For the challenge" is one answer, but more importantly to **tell a story** to others.

He demonstrated his approach by showing raw footage at St. Louis parks, and then the resulting finished product, "Our Precious Parks" which he made as a service to the Park Department. First he "brainstorms" his ideas, considers his audience, makes an outline, then a raw script. He looks for a

catchy title, and scenes to open with a punch. He makes note of additional scenes he may need, and especially **close-ups**. In his visual editing he cuts superfluous shots, re-arranges and usually leaves ambient sound. He has found the "Script Riter" program helpful.

Jerry stressed that **he practices delivering his narration over and over**. "Instead of using a normal voice," he said, "we should use an **abnormal voice**, avoiding a monotone and using pauses." **"Take time to get it right!"**

He used a hand-held mike for his interviews, preferable to using the camera mike. He sets the music volume at about one-half to one-third of the voice, and leaves it at the same level throughout, although not on all scenes. He tests the sound by putting a decibel meter (approximately \$45 at Radio Shack) about 12" in front of the TV speaker, testing the sound of the finished product.

"Copyright Issues and Video Making" – Mark Levy

Mark, a patent attorney and the editor of the AMMA "Monitor gave us expert opinion (at no fee!) regarding invasion of privacy and copyright violations.

Public figures do not have the right of privacy. Even an ordinary citizen walking in a parade becomes "a public figure." However, if we take videos of others, we should probably get a release, especially if the video is widely shown and sold commercially. We are particularly vulnerable if we show someone in an embarrassing situation. A person is deemed identifiable even by his voice alone, if recognizable. We should get permission to video a person's speech or an entertainment performance.

You may take any videos you want of residences or buildings from a public street, but if you are on their property, you can be charged with violating their right of privacy. How-

ever, even using a telephoto lens, shooting from a street into someone's window could get you in trouble!

Technically, we are in violation of copyright even if we only copy pages from a book. When video makers use copyrighted music, they are in violation, if they do not have approval. Even a wedding videographer is in violation if copyrighted music is used in a wedding. However, there is no known case of a person using copyrighted music as we do, non-commercially and not widely distributed, to have ever been charged with violation.

Charges of copyright violation result mainly when the owners sees a potential loss of sales. And the size of penalties is accordingly.

Your videos may be considered automatically copyrighted, but if you wish to sue someone for violation of your copyright, you must register them, at \$30. Your whole collection of videos could be registered for that one fee. If you copyright something, the right is good for your lifetime, plus 70 years! (does that make our videos virtually immortal?)

Mark mentioned that if we are really (unnecessarily?) nervous about using copyrighted music, we can resort to the so-called "buy-out" music, or even contact students in the music department of a school, who may welcome the chance to compose original music—probably for a small fee.

Panel Discussion

Roger Garretson chaired a panel of **Harold Cosgrove, Walt Gilmore and Mark Levy**, for a very informative Q and A session.

"What is the best way to store videos?"

The best way, presently, is to transfer them to DVDs. Although if you scratch a DVD it may be ruined. By experience, VHS and

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

SVHS have held up rather well, so far. Harold mentioned using a SVHS for many copies over a period of years which has shown no deterioration. MiniDVs have not been around long enough to judge. **Wally Shaw** suggested that to be on the safe side, we should make a stand-by copy of our raw footage. There is a recommendation that tapes should be stored vertically, not horizontally.

"What do your recommend for buy-out music?"

"River City Soul, "Fresh Music," "Music Bakery" were among those mentioned. Harold may have given us a golden idea in telling of a website, freeplaymusic.com, which offers hundreds of tunes free. You may not use them, however, in a commercial video. Catovah.com will list CDs of familiar tunes that have been synthesized. Right is given to use them, but not commercially.

"Are cheap DVD disks OK?"

Quality DVD blanks may be obtained for as little as \$1.25 each in bulk. There seems to be no assurance that a DVD you burn is playable in someone else's player, especially if the player is a few years old.

We were cautioned not to stick labels on DVDs. It may render them unplayable. However, Harold has found the Epson 900 printer can be used to print directly on the DVD, provided the DVD blank has an appropriate white finish. Gilmore offered that "Goo-Gone" works well at removing labels.

"How can we increase attendance at these festivals?"

More publicity, well in advance; the use of our website; the use of a publicity video of the upcoming meeting's location and program, were some of the suggestions. Also, that those winning in contests could be privately notified in advance, to promote their attendance.

SHOWINGS OF VIDEOS

Probably at least 100 videos were shown, and almost all were of acceptable quality, some outstanding.

Favorable Impressions—These opinions and observations are strictly my own. Others may differ.

It seemed the quality of pictures had improved immensely, so sharp and with such good color, somewhat due, perhaps, to the use of digital cameras and LA8s new projector. One travelogue maker privately shared that he used a Polarizer filter.

Some makers are highly imaginative and creative, traits which are probably not easily learned, but to be envied and admired. The choice of music, which some say is often their biggest challenge, seemed generally good, and the volume was rarely too loud. A few of the travel and documentary makers had exceptional writing and delivery skills, which make the difference between a good and excellent video.

The camera work was generally quite good, especially those who used close-ups. There may have been a little too much zooming and panning, but very few shaky makers.

Lessons Learned? ---Watching others' movies should be not just an opportunity to learn from the excellent techniques of others, but to be reminded of what not to do.

The so-called **Three Basic Rules of Editing**: 1. Cut! 2. Cut!

3. Cut! were often not carefully observed. A few of the videos seemed interminable. The longer they ran the less interesting they were. Redundant scenes were much in evidence. It's a rule we all might take to heart. It's not easy. It takes rigorous discipline!

Next in my order, were titles. Not the most important thing in a video,

but deserving of close attention. The worst titles were those using thin black or colored letters, and a big white outline, crowded together. Some were too small, at least as projected. I should talk! I was shocked at how hard to read a scroll was that I used, light purple letters against a black background. Look at commercial tv. They hardly ever use fancy lettering (except in commercials). At least 50% are white letters with a thin black outline. You can hardly go wrong with that.

Lighting was noticeably bad in a few videos.

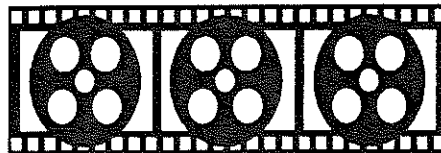
DOOR PRIZES

Eventually every person won a door prize, ranging from five \$200 software certificates, from Macro-Systems (makers of the Cassie/Kron line) to \$250 of equipment from Equipment Emporium, a So. Calif. company we might patronize (e-mail: eqe@earthlink.net for a catalog, or see www.equipmentemporium.com) and contributions from AMMA, Catovah Arts, and Video-maker Magazine.

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

The 2004 Festival will be held in Victoria, B.C. Canada, from September 23rd until September 26th, 2004. The same ideally located hotel, recently refurbished, will be used again.

AMMA is considering having the 2005 Festival on an Alaskan Cruise, there being enough interest.



(Continued from page 3)

tape.

1. The quality is noticeably better than S-VHS and much better than VHS, both video and audio.

2. A major advantage occurs for overseas distribution because the question of NTSC vs PAL etc. Format is not an issue. European DVDs play American DVDs automatically and vice versa.

3. They are smaller lighter and more easily packaged for mailing.

4. Durability, long life, is thought to be better than tape, although lately there was a test showing problems with durability on some cheap brands of DVD blanks.

5. A possible problem is that some earlier model DVD players will not play all DVDs. Many won't play DVD-RW and some won't play DVD-R or DVD+R. Hopefully judges have better players.

DVD players that have progressive scan offer some image improvement. If both your player and TV or video projector have **component connections** they should be used as again the image is a bit better than with the S (Y/C) connector. Note: Conventional three cable sets with red white and yellow RCA connections work just fine if a component cable set is not available. Some projectors have an adapter for component connectivity. Once again note that earlier TVs may not have component connectivity, if not use an S (Y/C) connector.

For those with computers there are several means of distribution of your movies, over the Internet, or by video CDs. None, that I have seen, provide the quality that we expect to see in our contest movies and none of the amateur competitions I am aware of accept movies by Internet or Video CDs. Here are Internet options, not including streaming video:

Email can be used to send short videos of fair quality, somewhat less than VHS. The smaller the image the smaller the file size and time required to upload and down load the email. For dial up Internet connections movies longer than a few seconds and larger than 1/4 screen size require prohibitive time. With broadband Internet connections much larger files with up to 1 minute of 1/4 screen video is usually acceptable.

My First Music Video by Gregory Raw

After buying a Casablanca AVIO and editing the family vacation videos, I decided it was time to try making a music video for my band. Since this was my first attempt, I planed on keeping the production side as simple as possible. On this video I just featured the singer on this tune.

I wanted to try out the idea of using slow motion on the video yet the singer would be singing in-sync with the song. We have a CD player that can alter the speed of a CD and keep the pitch the same. I wanted to double the speed of the music but found out it would only increase the speed by 50%. I decided to try a test to see if it could work.

I set-up my little DV camcorder and the singer mimed to the sped-up CD. I loaded the video into the editor and slowed it down by one third. Then I loaded the original music into the editor. I was able to get the music and the video to remain in-sync throughout the entire song.

For the shoot, I had burned a copy of the sped-up CD to play on my bass-player's ghetto blaster. I used tape to mask off the LCD display of the cam-

corder to match the letterbox option in my video-editor, for that "cinema look". The plan was to use natural light only with a little bounce card if needed and go to three locations that were about four blocks from each other.

We started at 10:00 a.m. in an alley behind an old theater. On first take, I used a tripod and quickly found that it lacked dynamics. So the rest of the time it was hand-held only. This allowed me to quickly set-up different angles and then move on. The third location was the most interesting. It was a grain silo and its towering columns would cast a giant shadow giving us a lot of soft light, which the camcorder handled better. Since it was a big area, it allowed for lots of interesting set-ups. We were lucky enough to have a train come by while we were shooting. The only adjustment we had to make was turning the ghetto blaster up to 10!

After completing the eleventh take, we were done by 11:45 a.m. With the music running 50% faster, each take was a little over 2 minutes.

After loading in the video, slowing it down by a third and adding the original music, I noticed something about "the look" of the video. It really wasn't slow

motion but it wasn't real-time either. The movement of the singer's hair and the fringe on her outfit had a softer "feel" about it. Best of all, the hand-held camera work looked smoother.

After completing the video edit, I showed it to the band. They liked it but wanted to add a couple of guitar parts and a sax part on the music. The original recording was done on a small digital multi-track recorder. We added the parts, I mixed down a new version and I loaded it into the video editor. I found a sync point and it stayed locked-in for the entire song.

To do this with analog equipment would have cost me a fortune to rent the additional equipment that is needed. All that was needed on this production was a CD of the music, DV camcorder and a ghetto blaster. I spent \$7 for the tape and \$7 for batteries for the ghetto blaster.

Generally, I was happy with the video and look forward to do another one that would include the entire band. The singer is very photogenic, she made it easy, but the rest of the band is a bunch of guys in their 50's. That's going to be work. I'll need heavy backlights; a "Doris Day" lens and does anybody know where I could order some Elvis girdle belts?

Winner's Reel and Copyright Issues discussion video now available

The winners reel from this year's festival is now available for purchase for \$7.00. Please make the check or money order payable to AMPS and send to Roger Garretson. The reel is only available in VHS.

Also available for purchase is Mark Levy's discussion "Copyright Issues and Videomaking." Mark gave this presentation at the convention. It is an interesting program and a must for anyone serious about production. The Copyright video is available for \$5.00. Please make the check or money order payable to AMPS and send to Roger Garretson. The reel is also available on DVD for \$7.00.

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP
AMERICAN MOTION PICTURE SOCIETY**

I Would like to Join the Society:

Dues USA: (includes - Movie Maker) \$ 10.00

Dues Canada: (includes. - Movie Maker) \$ 12.00

Dues-Foreign: (includes - Movie Maker) \$13.00

Enclosed _____

NAME: _____

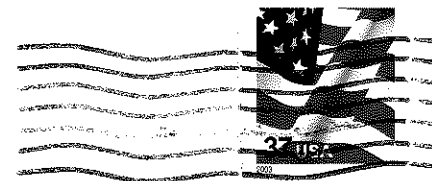
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30 Kanan Road
Oak Park, California
91377-1105



Dr. Matt Jenkins-Comm. Dept 06/01/04
2800 W. Gore Cameron University
Lawton OK 73515

